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LEE BURLING

By Nancy Gill McShea

Lee Burling is a celebrated tennis player and a veteran world class athlete in several other sports. Labels don't explain motivation or personality, but a search for clues revealed that Lee, who was born in Manchester, N.H., has mastered a self deprecating New England sense of humor to ease the stress that accompanies her strong personality, competitive drive and strict code of ethics.

When asked on April 6 how she was celebrating her 78th birthday, Lee replied that she had played tennis that morning, was at the moment reading about the survival of wolves in *National Geographic* magazine and was about to walk her dog Gitano. "He's my rescue dog, a gypsy," she said. "His mother was a loose woman and his father was a traveling salesman." She slipped into the conversation the news that her pickup truck was in the shop for an overhaul because chipmunks were living in the air filter so the truck was heating up and smelled like it was about to burst into flames. And oh, by the way, she was a terror in her childhood so her parents steered her toward sports to tire her out.

"I was a trial," she admitted with not a hint of regret. "I was so energetic my mother would tie me to the clothesline. When she came out to check on me the rope would still be there but I would be gone. So when I was 3 she started researching sleep-a-way camps for me."

Some 68 years after Lee first played tennis in a local park with her father, Charles Chadbourne, she is certain that the game has offered her the greatest opportunity to discover who she is, that it has defined her life. "I could be disruptive [acting silly] and I have a short fuse," she said, "but my parents and coaches held me accountable."

And if there is a category in the Guinness Book of World Records that tracks athletes who have won numerous USTA national senior championships and also represented the United States in a variety of other sports, Lee is definitely in the running for a spot in the top 100.

In 2006, Lee was inducted into the Syracuse Hall of Fame to honor her achievements. Years before she earned an international reputation in tennis – during the pre Title IX era when she attended Boston University's Sargent College and taught physical education at Smith College in Massachusetts – Lee literally played the field in sports. She was ranked fourth in the U.S. in badminton (1956), toured South Africa and played right wing for the U.S. field hockey team (1958-59), competed in the British Isles and in Ireland while playing center for the U.S. lacrosse team (1954-60) and was a member of the

1960 Massachusetts A.A.U. winning basketball team. She ranked third in the country in squash (1974) and also dabbled in competitive golf for 20 years.

She decided to focus on tennis in the late 1970s after she and her husband Jim, a math professor at SUNY Oswego, had settled in the area. Indoor courts were being built in upstate New York and she could play tennis year round. "That's when I gave up golf," she said. "You can't play a sport six months of the year and really accomplish anything....you can play tennis for the rest of your life."

She won her first USTA national tennis title in 1983 in women's 50 doubles and has since collected an astonishing 46 USTA gold tennis balls and some 31 silver, in singles and doubles. She has represented the U.S. on 10 international tennis teams. In 1987 she competed on the Maria Bueno Cup (50s) squad that defeated Great Britain for the championship in Finland and the next week she was a finalist in the individual world (50s) doubles contest in Germany. She was the 2000 ITF world (65s) singles champion in South Africa and a runner up in doubles. At the 2009 Super-Senior World Championships in Australia, she notched a doubles victory for the U.S. Queens Cup (75s) team. Not only that, hip (1993) and knee (2003) replacement surgeries interrupted her torrid pace.

Lee's friend Brad Mann has played tennis with her almost every week for 20 years. "We missed a couple of weeks after Lee's hip and knee surgeries," Brad said, "although she practiced her tennis swing while recovering in her hospital bed - I caught her in the act... When someone asks, 'Who are you playing tennis with today?' I love to brag and glibly reply, 'Oh, one of the top three players in the world.' If I won that day, I really had bragging rights!"

She played Eastern tournaments before she competed on the national senior circuit. But when she started traveling her family missed her presence and soon began complaining about her absences. So she informed them that she would curtail her athletic jaunts, become the best mother and wife, and would live her life through her husband and two children. For starters, she questioned her daughter Koren's resolve: "You are a runner," she said. "How come you're finishing 10th and not first?" And she challenged her son Temple: "The Burlings say you're very bright but I've seen no indication of this!" Then she posed a rhetorical question to her husband Jim: "You've got a Ph.D. in mathematics. How come you're not publishing?"

A week later, Koren and Temple told their mother they had held a family meeting and decided "we love you best when you leave." There was no problem ever again. "Jim gave me a tremendous amount of space and took care of the kids while I toddled around the country," she said. "I was lucky. When Jim and I were studying for graduate degrees at the University of Colorado, I called my father and said 'I think Jim proposed to me tonight.' Dead silence on his end. I continued and said 'Dad, I'm very nervous about this...It's a real commitment and I don't know if I can hold up my end of the deal.' Without missing a beat Dad said, 'Remember Lee, you haven't had too many offers.' I tell you, you had to have a sense of humor to be part of my family."

When she returned home from her tennis journeys she played and taught tennis at the Eastside Racquet

she incorporated into her tennis lessons the teaching of honesty, kindness, dignity, respect and humility. The gift she has given our children through tennis is the strength and courage to pursue any, and all, of their dreams."

Maureen Anderson, a USPTA pro who coaches tennis at the Manlius Pebble Hill School, said that Lee taught her how to be a better person. "Lee is a caring, yet feisty, opinionated individual," Maureen said. "The first time I had to play a doubles match across the net from her I discovered the true meaning of intensity, focus and match etiquette. I was inexperienced in competing; this was an education for me. There was no chatting, no nice shots, just complete business, quite alarming but a good lesson to learn...Needless to say I did not win!! This taught me to value the mental toughness needed for match play.



Lee Burling has excelled in world class competition in six sports: from left, basketball, field hockey, lacrosse and tennis. (Not pictured: squash and golf.)

Club in Manlius, N.Y. (formerly known as Limestone). Tennis students and local admirers rallied round her like groups.

"Lee has been an inspiration for our four sons throughout their childhood," her friends Lisa and Timothy Izant said. "She came into our lives as a tennis coach... and became a part of our family. She teaches tennis as a recreational...competitive...life-long sport and most importantly, as a platform for lessons in life. Tennis is Lee's forum in the education of children for a future to contribute to the tennis community and the community of mankind. She is a role model for the world of tennis, but most importantly she is an example of an exceptional human being. While Lee taught the elements of the game,

"Lee is a very competitive athlete and hates to lose... Her father taught her the importance of sportsmanship so she is always gracious in both victory and defeat and sets the example."

Lee herself offers a reality check on winning and losing in tennis. "Someone told me that 600 million people live in China; 300 million don't even know you played and the other 300 million don't give a damn!" she said. "That's true. I don't think I'm special, but I'm happy. Tennis has been tremendous for my self esteem and gave me the courage to stand up for what I know is right."

Stowe, Vermont. Buoyed by his results, Fritz turned pro two weeks before the 1979 Open, and by year's end he ranked among the world's top 100.

In early 1980 he fell prey to the sophomore slump and admitted that a poor work ethic might be the culprit. Luckily, his former coach Harry Hopman asked him to train on the Peugeot-Rossignol team under coach Bob Brett. The team was designed to give structure to young pros, among them Jose Luis Clerc, Andres Gomez and a few other comers. Fritz caught a second wind, inched up the singles rankings to No. 69 and then broke through.

By December of 1980 he had reached his first singles final at the South African Open in Johannesburg, defeating 1977 US Open champ Guillermo Vilas and doubles specialist Bob Lutz before losing to Kim Warwick in the title match. Three weeks later, he won his first Grand Prix singles title at the New South Wales Open in Sydney, Australia. He beat future French Open champ Yannick Noah in the second round and prevailed in the final, 6-4, 6-7, 7-6, over UCLA graduate Brian Teacher.

"Doing well at Johannesburg and Sydney was the springboard," said Fritz, whose singles ranking jumped to No. 21 at the end of 1980. Victories over guys in the top ten kept mounting; he was in the running.

In the summer of 1981 *Tennis* magazine's editorial group singled him out as a player to watch. Another reporter wrote that his blazing serve, savage volleys and explosive temper made him one of the top competitors and one of the leading personalities on the tour.

In 1982 he lost to Clerc in the finals of Richmond but that same year he beat Gene Mayer in Mexico. By 1983 he had posted significant wins over Grand Slam champ Mats Wilander, future Wimbledon champ Pat Cash and top tenners Kevin Curren and Tim Mayotte.

Fritz says that his favorite victories were in singles against the cream of the crop, yet one of his most memorable victories came in doubles at Wimbledon in 1982. He and his partner Ferdie Taygan defeated Heinz Gunthardt and Balazs Taroczy 8-6 in the fifth set to earn a spot in the quarters where they lost in four sets to eventual champs Peter McNamara and Paul McNamee.

Fritz was a well known doubles specialist; he netted 12 titles and reached the finals 15 times. Some were repeats with partners Taygan, a 1981 victory over the Mayer brothers at Rotterdam and a semifinal showing at the US Open; and with Fleming, especially a 6-3, 6-0 route of Tomas Smid and Gundhardt at the 1984 U.S. Indoors in Memphis, and a three setter in 1981 over the Giammalvas at Atlanta.

...The life we live with after that...In 1984 Fritz was 24 and had bone spurs removed from his foot. He returned to the circuit too quickly, developed pain and was diagnosed with a stress fracture. Over a period of two years – from 1985-87 -- he underwent six operations to treat bone spurs in the ankle joint and a stress fracture in the navicular bone. He walked with a cast and crutches during that time frame.

"If you can't run you can't play tennis," Fritz said, "so that was it!"

He played his last match in March of 1985 and retired officially in 1987.

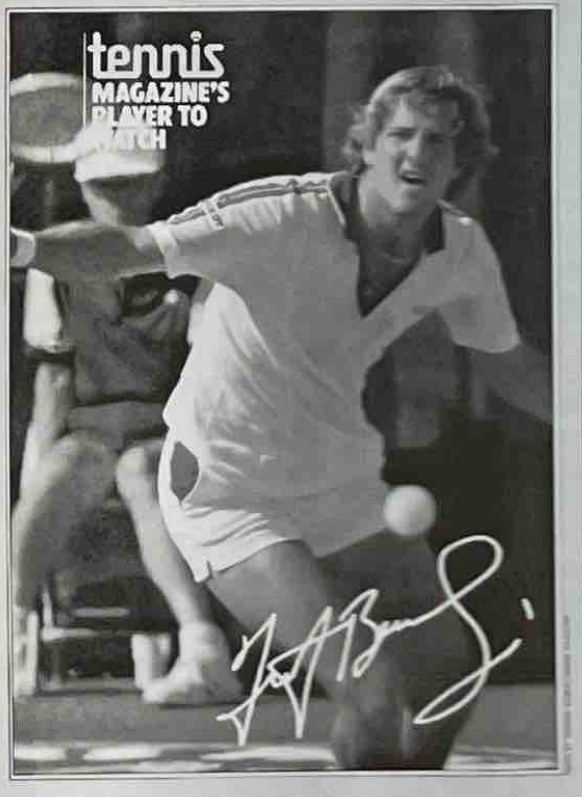
"I was pretty depressed for a very long time," he said. "I'm [a member of the Open's] 'Final 8' Club but I didn't go back to the tournament for 7 years. The guys I came up with were all still out there."

He immersed himself instead in his family's manufacturing business in Hillside, N.J. "My grandfather started the business, we sold plastics machinery," said Fritz, who took on the role of international sales manager. When the business closed, he became involved in selling the company's assets.

Fritz now teaches tennis at Twin Oaks in Morristown, N.J., and works in industrial sales for a Chicago plastics company. He also enjoys the accomplishments of his three children – Gerhard, a senior at Rutgers and the captain of the lacrosse team; Chelsea, who plays soccer on scholarship at USC; and Saxon, a junior tennis player who trains at Saddlebrook in Florida.

Like Hobbs, Fritz has lived the line from *The Natural*. He has closed a few doors and discovered a few new beginnings.

"Tennis was my life," he said, "and it is still my passion. I can play a decent set of singles and a couple of sets of doubles." A good omen, that!



Tennis magazine called Fritz Buehning the player to watch in 1981.

STEVE FLINK

By Nancy Gill McShea

Tennis journalists in the media room at the Grand Slams refer to Steve Flink as "Sir Steve." He is a legend in the sport, an encyclopedia of tennis who stores in his mind every box score, court strategy, descriptive adjective and personal history of every world class tennis player. His photographic memory rivals the Dustin Hoffman character in *Rainman* and even Hall of Famers Chris Evert, Pete Sampras and the late Arthur Ashe have deferred to Steve in public interviews to clarify dates, scores and momentum shifts in their matches.

Steve paints graphic pictures to share with fans his unique understanding of the intricacies of every match and to give life to the people he writes about.

No doubt you have read dozens of Steve's 2,000-plus published tennis essays, listened to him on the radio and watched him on television. He currently writes a column for TennisChannel.com. From 1992-2007 he was a senior correspondent for *Tennis Week*. From 1974-91 he was a columnist and an editor for *World Tennis* magazine. Since 1982 he has covered Wimbledon and the French Open for CBS radio. From 1980-96 he was a color commentator for MSG and ESPN. In the 1970s and '80s he worked as a statistician for NBC, CBS and ABC tennis telecasts. He is the author of "The Greatest Tennis Matches of the Twentieth Century."

Steve's career in tennis began as a tale of two cities. His father, Stanley, first took him to Wimbledon at age 12, in 1965. "I was hooked, totally enamored of the environment," he said. At summer's end, he returned to his home base in New York to watch his favorite Americans of that generation — Ashe, Clark Graebner, Dennis Ralston, Nancy and Cliff Richey — at the U.S. National Championships in Forest Hills, there setting up a Wimbledon-US Open pattern for the next 45 years.

"I knew by the time I was 15 that I wanted to be a tennis reporter," he said.

Everybody depended on newspapers before the internet surfaced and Steve said that when he was touring Greece at 17 "it was killing me that I couldn't get the tennis results. I hunted down the *Herald Tribune* at Crete, found a place that sold the international issue and got back copies. I had to know every day what was happening.

"Once I saw a score it was locked into my head. I can't explain it; I just had a passion for it." He liked numbers and said that gave him a niche in establishing himself. "Initially, it was the numbers that got me on the board, but I started understanding the game itself much better when I was in my twenties."

In 1970 he moved to England to study at the U.S. International University in Sussex and played college tennis. The word on Flink in team brochures: "He has a well rounded game...excellent student of the sport, practices constantly...main asset is consistency." He jammed his weekly courses into three days and rushed back to his father's abode in London to hang out at the Queen's Club.

"They were important years," said Steve, whose father introduced him to Bud Collins, John Barrett and Graebner. "Queen's was a great education. Everybody floated through — Ted Tinling, Cliff Richey, Butch Buchholz and Marty Riessen — and I would have conversations with them. Tinling would hold court in the dining room, regaling me with stories from the latest tournaments...I learned a ton listening to him talk about the game."

He added the French Open to his repertoire in 1971 and in 1973 he walked up to Chris Evert, asked her for an interview and she agreed. He sold the story to *World Tennis*, his first, and a week later received a check from the editor, Gladys Heldman. He wrote another story for *World Tennis* in 1974, and the magazine offered him a job.

"Bud Collins knew I had this memory and hired me in 1972 to help him at Wimbledon and the US Open," he said. "There were no computers, no official head-to-heads put out by the tours so Bud would ask me questions like 'How many times has Ashe beaten Okker?'...I also read *World Tennis* every month and picked up stats from old issues, so it all just got into my system."

At the 1972 Open he met another mentor in Jack Kramer, who was working with Bud on CBS while Steve was doing the stats. "Jack taught me a lot," he said. "We later worked on instruction articles for *World Tennis* and conversations shifted to other relevant topics in the game."

Ashe played Nastase in that 1972 Open final. "Ashe was a hero of mine," Steve said. "I loved it when he won the first Open (in 1968) and this time he was poised to take the title again. He was leading Nastase 2 sets to 1, with a break point for 4-1 in the 4th...which would have put him out of reach. He ended up losing it in 5. He sat down afterward, put his head in his hands and cried. I went off to the clubhouse and cried myself."

Steve's trip to the historic 1972 U.S.-Romania Davis Cup match in Bucharest was a major learning experience. The U.S. team received terrorist threats. Two angry Romanian guards approached Steve, and started shouting "American agent, American agent!" and tried to hustle him off the grounds when British writers rescued him.

"It was a great moment in my evolution as a reporter to be there at age 20," he said. "Stan Smith was the hero, beating Nastase in the opening match. Then Gorman was up two sets on Tiriac, who got the crowd chanting to give him extra time between points. Tiriac beat Gorman. It was nerve wracking, but Smith and Erik Van Dillen won the doubles and Stan beat Tiriac 6-0 in the fifth to clinch on the last day, despite a stream of bad calls."

Excerpted thoughts from his media pals — journalists, editors and television/radio broadcasters — offer an inside view of Sir Steve:

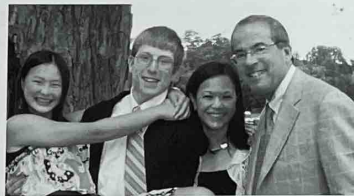
Neil Amdur — "Long before computers spewed endless reams of data, there was always Steve Flink to recall the glorious moments in tennis. And remind us, he could...of a memorable match you barely retained on the fringes of appreciation...There are one-of-a-kind stat freaks in every sport who can recite batting averages, fantasy football numbers and three-point shooting percentages...But Steve's persona is wrapped around more than numbers. He inhabits his own King Midgard filled with the joy and optimism of someone who treasures the true meaning of love, from court to life...he attaches the same meticulous preparation and detail to sartorial coat and tie selections at Wimbledon, Paris or Flushing Meadows, as he does to a thoughtfully researched, well-written original piece of journalism."

Mary Carillo — "Steve can call up matches from decades past and put them in modern day context...Steve can't be spun — he knows just what he's watched and ably reports what he's seen, every single time..."

Bud Collins — "I've known Steve since he was a kid living in London, a tennis degenerate as we call each other...We covered the uproarious U.S.-Romania Davis Cup final in '72...He, Mary and I formed the TV team for the women's season-ending championships at Madison Square Garden. His facts and figures were as clear on the air as in his writing...Most reporters today resemble ragbats but Steve stands out eloquently in his appearance, much like his mentor, the great *New Yorker* writer Herbert Warren Wind."

Andre Christopher — "I have never known another writer who uses adjectives the way Steve does. If you could get him to describe any activity you were doing, I'm sure it would be like seeing yourself in slow motion. And almost everybody looks cool in slow motion. Not as cool as Steve, mind you, but cool enough...Steve in a press room is like a Rolls Royce in a Walmart parking lot, but he has an Everyman affability that betrays the stuffiness of his wardrobe."

Matt Cronin — "At the Grand Slams, even when Steve is...doing 3 radio reports per hour and trying to fit a column or two into his day, he finds time to check up on his beloved Yankees. He's so obsessed with his boys in pinstripes that I swear, even when his favorite male



The Flink family, from left, Amanda, Jonathan, Frances and Steve.

player, Pete Sampras, was going for his then record 14th Slam, Steve was more concerned about whether Mariano Rivera was losing accuracy off his cutter."

Joel Drucker — "Tennis is lucky to have Steve in its family. As he himself would put it with trademark precision, he has graced our sport with considerable brio and élan. It's an honor to be a colleague of a man so passionate and generous."

Wayne Kalyn — "Other than being the Intel chip of tennis, Steve is an expert on gabardine trousers — with cuffs, always cuffs — on the racks of Paul Stuart's, black buff, burger and baked potato at Joe Allen's... Perplexed Manhattan doormen are still scratching their heads over Steve's detailed encomium to the Sampras restaurant back in the '90s...the proprietor of China Bowl restaurant — a victim of the wrecking ball — will never forget Steve's weekly panegyric about the lunch specials. The proud proprietor agreed with Steve's assessment and responded, "Thank you, Mr. Flink... The salesman at the shirt department at Brooks Brothers admired Steve's expertise...He imparts his wisdom with the best that Chaucer and Buddy Hackett had to offer — he entertains... Passion — and a laugh — is always the point..."

Richard Pagliaro — "Steve's writing is to tennis journalism what Rosewall's backhand is to classic strokes... He has unwavering concentration in covering a match, charts every single point with his own distinctive notetaking system yet can simultaneously carry on a running analysis of the match on a point-by-point basis... He is a traditionalist...yet a fiercely independent thinker."

Scott Price — "Steve is always tan; he's our George Hamilton and one of the dearest people I know... We're all professionals, all scrambling around, sort of protecting our turf. Steve isn't built that way. He wants everybody to come in and enjoy tennis. He's as generous with his time and his knowledge as anyone in any sport. I've been covering sports for 25 years and Steve is truly one of a kind, not only as a tennis resource and historian but as a human being..."

TONY FRANCO

By Nancy Gill McShea

Still ruggedly handsome and agile on the eve of his 85th birthday, Philadelphia native Tony Franco, who once had a blind date with Grace Kelly and looks like he could have auditioned for the Cary Grant role in the 1940 movie "The Philadelphia Story," instead left the city in 1938 for more exotic surroundings and landed a role in tennis.

"I was 13 when my Dad was transferred and moved the family to Puerto Rico," Tony said. "And that was the

craft tank. "We landed at Normandy in July of 1944, six weeks after the invasion so there were no fireworks," said Tony, who spent time running supplies back and forth from England and up and down the Seine, once that was secure, and was lucky enough to be in Paris on VE Day for one of the bigger parties of all time. He completed his tour of duty and finished up at Penn.

"My Dad is modest and a gentleman who doesn't like to talk about himself so I'll share a story," his daughter Lola said. "When my Dad arrived at Penn he was 5-foot-4 and weighed 90 lbs. The coach of the crew team tried to recruit him and promised a varsity letter as Penn had a tremendous crew team in the 1940s. But my Dad told the coach in his squeaky voice that he was going out for the tennis team because he would rather get a letter for being good, not for being small. He made the varsity tennis team as a freshman."

Tony graduated from Penn in 1949 and has fond memories of playing tennis there. "Fred Kovaleski's William and Mary squad and Dick Savitt's Cornell team clobbered us," he said, "but the last weekend of the season we defeated both Harvard and Dartmouth." He went home to Puerto Rico to work as a trainee with IBM and continued to play tennis regularly with Charlie Pasarelli's father – the future pro was 2 at the time – and the pair once split sets in an exhibition at the Caribe Hilton with the famous Fred Perry and Martin Burby.

In 1951 he was 25, single, and his IBM bosses asked where he'd like to be assigned. "I told them Rio, Havana or Mexico City," said Tony, who understood well that IBM meant 'I'll Be Moving!' IBM passed on exotic locales and sent him to Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, to set up an office and build the business.

Honduras was home for 12 years and at a party he met Edith, the perfect Grace Kelly to his Cary Grant. They were married in 1956 and will celebrate their 54th anniversary this June.

In 1963 Tony and Edith moved on to Mexico City, IBM's Caribbean Central American area headquarters.

Tony continued to play tennis at every destination, of course, and represented Puerto Rico at the Central American and Caribbean Olympics; Honduras at the Central American Championships; and Mexico at the Stevens Cup competition.

In late 1969, Tony and his family returned to the U.S. and settled in Briarcliff, N.Y. He now plays tennis

regularly at both Club Fit at Briarcliff and the Saw Mill Club. In 1970, he became eligible to compete in USTA men's 45 senior events. The top four seeds in the first Eastern tournament he played were Bobby Riggs, Ellis Flack, Al Doyle and Tony Vincent, along with national contenders Bill Tully and Alan Fleming. "A pretty tough crowd," he said, yet he managed to rank No. 10 in the East that year. He later ranked first in the East from the men's 50s on up and chaired Eastern's senior ranking committee, a volunteer assignment he handled from 1976 through 1989 when he retired from IBM. He was also the captain of Eastern's Atlantic Coast 45 and 55 Senior Intersectional team matches.

Tony was a national quarterfinalist in the 55s and turned heads in the 60s when, unseeded, he upset Riggs, the top seed and defending champ, 6-3, 6-3, at the 1986 USTA National 60 Clay Courts in Little Rock, Arkansas. Asked if strategy were the key, Tony replied, "I just tried not to miss and I was lucky I was able to move fairly well. It was one of those days when everything seemed to go right, and Riggs was six years older than I was."

Riggs told newspaper reporters that he had run into a buzz saw player, Tony. Curt Beusman, Tony's longtime doubles partner, ordered a batch of T-shirts for their tennis buddies imprinted with "Buzz Saw Franco!"

The good times rolled and longevity ruled. "We've become friends with players and their wives over the years," Tony said. "It's kind of a tight knit fraternity, an interesting group." He played Fred Kovaleski in college and 51 years later lost to him in the final of the 2000 USTA National 75 Grass Courts. The runner-up finish earned Tony a spot on the 2001 U.S. Men's 75 Bitych Grant Cup team in Australia. Then Tony struck gold in 2004 when he beat his friend Grady Nichols in three sets to win his first national singles title at the USTA Men's 75 Grass Courts at Orange Lawn in New Jersey.

He is now a seasoned veteran on the world stage, having represented the U.S. on five men's 80 world cup teams, most of them played in Antalya, Turkey. Tony won his first world singles title there in 2006, the year Nichols talked him into playing both singles and doubles in the same event. Together they have captured three world doubles titles: in Turkey and in Australia; and they have won seven USTA national senior titles.

"Tony is a great partner and friend," Nichols said. "He has a joke for every occasion. They just keep flying out of his mouth and he keeps us all loose."

Kovaleski is also a fan. "Tony is a wonderful competitor and a genuine sportsman who always does the right thing," said Fred, who has never lost to his friend. "In the heat of competition senior players will do almost anything to win, but Tony will never give anyone a bad call. Watch out for his forehead, though; it's a weapon."

It's a good thing Tony has a sense of humor because his losses to Kovaleski are a family joke. Lola's oldest son Patrick used to ask his grandfather, "How did you do?" and Tony would say, "Oh, I lost to Mr. Kovaleski." The last time Patrick asked Tony "How did you do?" Tony answered glumly, "Same result," and Patrick said, "Do you think you can beat Mrs. Kovaleski?"

Lola said Patrick's Dad, Kevin Seaman, wasn't laughing the first time he played his future father in law when Tony was 60. "Kevin was 23, in great shape and had played varsity tennis at Hobart," Lola said. "He was certain that he could beat a man 39 years his senior. But Dad is a very smart player. He has a horrible backhand and a lame serve so he covers his weak spots and studies his opponent. Just like in chess, he can see what's going to happen next on the court and it's fascinating to watch him figure it out. Kevin wasn't moving well, Dad saw that right away and whooped him, like 0 and 1. He ran Kevin all over the court, hit all the corners, lobbed him and drop shot him. Kevin thought he was going to have a heart attack."

Tony Jr. says his Dad is a very good parent but he, too, has been stung by that cagey court strategy. "Dad is highly competitive but doesn't mind losing," he said. "He has a heck of a drop shot and he used to take great pleasure in hitting one that I couldn't get to...The first time I couldn't get to his drop shot I was in my late thirties and I could see that he was a little bit sad. I think it showed he felt bad for me that I was getting older...it said something about him, that there's no greater pride than seeing your child do well..."



Tony -- 71 years on the court!

first time I stepped onto a tennis court." He picked up an old, loosely strung racket that looked more like a lacrosse stick and learned the game with local kids at the Condado Beach Hotel and the San Juan Country Club.

In the 71 years since he ventured inside the white lines, Tony has put together a fascinating tennis background at the same time he forged a successful business career with IBM.

A self described late bloomer, he was 80 years old when he earned his first USTA No. 1 singles ranking in 2005, and the world's No. 1 singles ranking in 2006. He has won five ITF world championships (1 singles, 4 doubles), 12 USTA national senior titles (4 singles, 8 doubles) and has reached the finals eight times (twice in the 75s and six times in the 80s). In 2009, Captain Franco led the U.S. Gardnar Mulloy Cup (80s) team to the silver medal at the Super-Senior World Championships in Australia.

To get the ball rolling on his long journey, he returned to Philly in 1942 and enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania. He detoured briefly to enlist in the U.S. Navy during World War II and served aboard a landing



Edith and Tony celebrated his world championship in Turkey.